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ABSTRACT

One of four packets designed to help day care providers meet the needs of handicapped children and their parents, the booklet focuses on ways to improve communication with parents. A workshop on the topic planned by a family counselor is described, and sample publicity forms and handouts from the session are included. A list of 16 provider expectations is followed by a description of four guidelines for communicating with parents. Other handouts include a discussion of "I messages" which allow for expression of feelings without violating the rights of others. Sample training evaluation questions are provided. (CL)

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Communicating With Parents

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Special Needs Children in Family Day Care

Introduction

One of our Outreach projects this year has been the development of training materials for family day care programs which serve young children with special needs.

These materials are based on a second year of Outreach training given to family day care providers in rural Washington County, Maine. In the first year, a working relationship was established and some important general training needs were met. This year, our four workshops focused on special needs children. Now, we are looking forward to and planning a third year! The on-going nature of this association has allowed us to be even more effective in "building" rapport, knowledge, and meaningful exchange between our agencies and among providers.

Working in a rural, isolated county with a group of approximately ten busy providers of differing needs and abilities, our only "hold" has been the quality of what we had to offer. Our philosophy is to bring providers together at our workshops - giving them a chance to consider and practice new ideas and methods, as well as share the problems and successes of their jobs. WCCP Outreach advisors, assigned for the year to each provider, are present at these workshops. In-between, advisors make regular visits to the day care homes, working with providers in their own environments. In this way, they find a style appropriate to the individual's family and home, while providing assistance, materials, and information.

This two-fold approach is based on the belief that building confidence and group rapport is paramount. Shared meals at workshops, recognition of accomplishments, time for involvement activities, and regular communication via memos through the mail are some of the means to this end.

From the start, we have had the support of the county director for family day care. We jointly decided on the topic for the first Outreach workshop, and future training was an outgrowth of both this and common concerns expressed by providers. Each of the following workshops may be viewed as an entity in itself, and yet part of a progression based on evolving needs:

1. Screening and Identification
2. Stimulating Language
3. Creating Awareness
4. Communicating With Parents

The four packets, making up Special Needs Children in Family Day Care, may be used as a series or singly and are appropriate for a variety of group situations, in addition to family day care.

Catherine Bell, Product Development Coordinator
Ingrid Chalufour, Outreach Training Coordinator

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

Agenda & Explanation

For this workshop, we felt a person trained in counseling techniques could best create the supportive, supervised atmosphere needed to discuss the difficulties (present and potential) providers have in communicating with parents. We did careful planning with this consultant (a family counselor and MSW), based on the providers' written comments regarding their problems. She then ran the workshop - devising the schedule and some handouts, and leading all discussions. Throughout, there was emphasis on establishing an on-going mechanism for communicating with parents. Then, when a problem arises, it is not such a difficult process.

9:00 Introductions and Coffee

9:30 Informing parents of our expectations and rules:

In small groups, providers and an advisor designed a written hand-out for parents. (See sample.)

11:00 Informing parents of a child's progress:

Ways to discuss a child's strengths and weaknesses, the results of screenings, etc. were covered. In relation to the "Guidelines" hand-out, the consultant and trainer did a role-play. They demonstrated how a provider might discuss the "results" of a screening with a parent. (See sample.)

Establishing time for meetings with parents was a problem. The group considered various issues: meeting monthly or on a day by day basis, making evening phone calls, and avoiding discussions in front of child or other parents.

12:00 Lunch

Each person contributed an ingredient for a "make your own" sandwich luncheon. We allowed this time for the consultant, advisors, and providers to relax and talk. As of this, our fourth workshop, it was obvious that we have become a real "group." (See sample.)

1:00 Seeking help for a child's problem:

In a role-play, providers requested a parent's consent to seek outside consultation. We practiced in pairs, providers and advisors taking turns. This was less threatening than asking participants to "perform" in front of the group.

2:15 Voicing your concerns about the parents' care for a child:

How to let parents know your feelings about such issues as sickness, uncleanliness, inappropriate dress, abuse, etc. was discussed in relation to the "I Messages" handout. Again, we used role-play.

2:45 Summary and Evaluation

SAMPLES

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS - A Problem Solving Workshop

- How to discuss children with their parents
- How to communicate your limits (time, money, etc.) to parents

Thursday, May 27, 1982

9:00 - 3:00

Washington County Children's Program Office

80 Main St.

Machias

Please return to: Ingrid Chalufour
WCCP Outreach
P.O. Box 311
Machias, ME 04654

I plan to attend the Communicating with Parents Workshop

Name _____

Phone _____

MEMO

To: Providers

From: Cathy Bell

Re: Communicating with Parents Workshop

Here is your list of expectations for parents - jointly devised at our last workshop. I think we all agreed it would be worthwhile to 1) post the list on a large board and 2) provide it as a handout to be discussed with parents. If you need more copies, please let your director know.

You may want to "pick and choose" what you're comfortable with, or otherwise vary this list. I've included all of your suggestions and, at times, an "expectation" may have been stated several ways.

It has been fun getting to know you. I've learned a lot. Have a good summer!

Provider Expectations

1. All children must be presentable and clean.
2. If your child will not be coming for the day (or only part-time), please call by 7:00 a.m.
3. Please provide a clean change of clothes for your child.
4. Do not bring toys (except security animals) from home.
5. Do not bring food from home. (Notify provider if a special diet is needed.)
6. A child with a fever should not be brought to day care.
7. When you arrive, come in the house with your child.
8. Please try not to make last-minute promises to your child. (ie. "I'll pick you up early today.")
9. Breakfast will not be served after _____.
10. Lunch is served at _____.
    Please let your provider know by _____ if your child will need lunch.
    If a child is late, the parent must provide a lunch.
11. Pick up time will be _____.
    There will be an additional charge of $1/hr. after this time.
12. Parents must pay for the number of days that their child is enrolled (whether child is there or not).
13. If there are any changes in schedule, parents should notify provider by _____.
14. If unable to pay at the end of the week, parents must make special arrangements with the provider.
15. Respect your provider's hours for babysitting.
16. Respect your provider as a person.

WCCP Outreach Project
Day Care Provider Workshop

Guidelines for Communicating with Parents

Day Care providers have a wealth of information about a child's development and understanding of the child's strengths, needs, and problems. The importance of communicating this information to the parent, and of the parent sharing his or her understanding of the child with the provider cannot be overemphasized.

Parents are greatly reassured to know their child is developing normally and what they can realistically expect of the child. Likewise, they have a right to know when the child has a particular problem, even though this is sometimes difficult for them to hear.

The following guidelines are intended to help the day care provider 1) inform the parent of the child's progress, and 2) discuss with the parent the child's needs and how best to meet them.

I. Inform the parent of all areas of the child's development. Try to be factual, concrete and objective. Whenever possible, provide specific examples and use a child assessment scale.

II. Ask the parent to give his or her observations of how the child is performing at home. Listen to the parent's report. Do not disagree or discount what the parent says.

III. Summarize your assessment, and that of the parent. Describe the child's strengths and problem areas.

IV. Problem-Solve with parents. Seek agreement with the parent on the most important areas of the child's development to be worked on. Discuss ways in which both you and the parent may be able to help the child in his or her development, or to overcome a problem.

Sally Buckwalter, M.S.W., 1982.

Washington County Children's Program

Outreach

Communicating with Parents Workshop

We're glad you are coming to our workshop. For lunch, we are having a Sandwich Bar Pot Luck. Would you please bring the following checked item:

_____ a loaf of bread

_____ a sandwich filling

_____ a jar of mayonnaise

_____ lettuce and tomatoes

_____ a dessert

Using "I messages"

"I messages" are a way of letting people know how their behavior is affecting others - without putting them down or taking away their right to decide for themselves what to do.

"I messages" are based on the belief that everyone has feelings, attitudes, and rights - especially the right to decide for oneself how to act. At the same time, people do not have a right to violate the rights of others. "I messages" also assume that we cannot know what is best for someone else. We can only state our beliefs and what is right for us.

To give effective "I messages":

1. Describe the behavior or condition that is bothering you.

2. State how it affects you by describing your feelings, attitudes, and rights.

Examples:

When I see Johnny come with no warm coat on, I get pretty worried about his health.

When you are late picking Johnny up, I get a little annoyed because I can't do what I need to get done.

When Johnny comes so dirty that the other children won't play with him, I feel really badly for him.

Don't	Do
Accuse the other person.	State what the specific problem behavior is, and describe it.
Tell them what they ought to do or assume they don't care.	Express your feelings, beliefs, and rights by describing them.
Judge the behavior, by suggesting what is right or wrong.	Allow the other person a choice in how to respond to your rights and feelings.
Assume you don't have rights or feelings.	Remind yourself that you have rights.
Cover up your real concerns.	Be honest.
Make general vague statements to express your concern.	Be specific.

Sally Buckwalter, M.S.W., 1982.

WASHINGTON COUNTY CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Outreach Project

Training Evaluation

Subject of Session _____

Name(s) of Trainer(s) _____

Date _____

	Rating Scale				
	Poor				Excellent
1. What is your overall rating of the session?	1	2	3	4	5
2. What was the quality of the presentation?					
a. organization	1	2	3	4	5
b. interest	1	2	3	4	5
c. materials used	1	2	3	4	5

3. Did the trainer(s) clearly state the goals and objectives for the session?

_____ Yes _____ No

4. Do you feel more knowledgeable about the subject presented?
Please comment:

5. What changes or additional topics would you suggest?
Please comment:

6. List specific areas of interest which you would like to see addressed in follow-up programs.
Specific Areas:

7. How was the length of the presentation?

We welcome additional comments and suggestions. Thank you.

Washington County Children's Program Outreach

Day Care Home Advisor Record Sheet

Day Care Provider: Advisor:

Date of visit to home:

Purpose of visit:

Preparation previous to visit:

Day Care Provider's Concerns and Interests:

Your Comments on Visit:

Future Plans:

Ideas/Implications for development of Day Care materials: